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\*WPD401 09/21/2006  
NATO Ministers Discuss Importance of Afghan Mission  
(Secretary Rice touts NATO as great source of security) (850)

By Judy Aita  
Washington File Staff Writer

New York -- Taking advantage of the opening of the 61st U.N. General Assembly to prepare for their summit later this year, NATO foreign ministers reaffirmed the importance of the mission in Afghanistan and emphasized the need to link security with economic development efforts, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said September 21.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried said that the meeting provided an impetus for the November summit in Riga, Latvia, and "an important opportunity for us to remind ourselves and the world how important NATO is to our common security." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060725124550MVyelwarC0.3291284> ).)

Secretary of State Condoleezza told the ministers that "in a world where our interests and our ideas are increasingly joined, in a world where our democratic principles are our greatest source of security, NATO remains one of the most important, effective, and remarkable alliances in history," Fried said.

The ministers had a "good discussion" of NATO's operations in Afghanistan, success in supporting reform and deepening democracy in Eastern Europe and help for African Union (AU) peacekeepers in Darfur, the U.S. assistant secretary said.

Scheffer said that prior to the session he met with President Denis Sasson-Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, current president of the African Union, to discuss NATO assistance for the AU force in Darfur, referred to as AMIS. Scheffer said he promised that he would "do everything I can to see that NATO can respond positively" to AU requests.

The AU decided on September 20 to remain in Darfur until the end of the year. The United Nations had intended to take over and strengthen peacekeeping operations in the devastated Sudanese province October 1, but the Sudanese government has refused to accept a U.N. operation. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060915141130esnamfuak0.0915491> ).)

Scheffer said NATO will not be contributing ground troops but will do "anything they might wish in support of this very important effort, in these very difficult circumstances," such as continuing to airlift troops and provide training.

Providing assistance to the African Union in Darfur will not require a decision by the NATO ministers, but can be handled in NATO's Brussels, Belgium, headquarters, with NATO ambassadors and military planners, he said.

"NATO, on the basis of its huge experience, can enable the AMIS force to continue to the end of the year to do its work," Scheffer said.

Fried said that the United States sees NATO assistance to the African Union "as another example of NATO's increasing role around the world. It can be called on for support in many places where NATO has not been present traditionally and is present today."

#### MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE IN AFGHANISTAN

Scheffer said that alliance countries have "stepped up to the plate" in providing help for Afghanistan, but more needs to be done.

He said Poland has pledged to send 1,000 more soldiers, Romania has offered 200 troops, and other nations are in the political process to see if they can contribute.

It also is important that "nations do more than they have done to lift their caveats" on what their troops can and cannot do, the secretary-general said.

Afghanistan is "NATO's first priority and most important operation and it is absolutely necessary that we do what we promised to do in filling the requirement for the force," Scheffer said.

NATO has about 20,000 troops in Afghanistan to help protect development and reconstruction teams, but has been clashing with Taliban guerrillas in the south. The United States has a separate force of about 20,000 under its own command fighting Taliban and al-Qaida forces.

"On Afghanistan there is a clear sense that the development efforts and development cooperation must be stepped up," Scheffer continued.

NATO can create the climate of stability and security -- which is a precondition for development, nation building and reconstruction, but development issues should receive more attention "because you will have no long-lasting stability without development," he said.

More attention should be paid to the country's serious narcotics problem, Scheffer said. Afghan officials must put emphasis on the drug problem, but the international community must also "see how we can most effectively and efficiently fight this scourge."

Fried praised NATO operations in southern Afghanistan.

"The Taliban seemed to assume that NATO would be weak and irresolute and could surge forward militarily in the south against what they thought were weaker allies. They were sadly mistaken in this," Fried said.

The ministers also discussed future NATO enlargement and what signal the allies might want to give nations in the western Balkans seeking membership, the secretary-general said. No decision was made, he said.

Scheffer said he had the impression that in the Riga, Latvia, summit the ministers will reaffirm their inclination to increase membership, "but certainly mention the need for continued performance for those nations who are aspiring for NATO membership."

For further information, see Rebuilding Afghanistan ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding\\_afghanistan.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan.html) ) and Darfur Humanitarian Emergency ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html> ).

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\*WPD402 09/21/2006

U.S.-Based Group Offers \$50 Million To Promote Nuclear Security  
(Officials welcome effort to build international nuclear fuel reserve) (590)

By David McKeeby  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – A U.S.-based organization is offering the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) \$50 million toward the creation of an international nuclear fuel reserve that would allow countries to reap the benefits of civil nuclear power without having to develop nuclear enrichment capabilities that could pose a weapons proliferation risk.

Former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, announced the offer in a September 19 speech during the IAEA's 50th General Conference in Vienna, Austria.

A nongovernmental organization dedicated to reducing the threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, NTI, was founded in 2000 by Nunn and former media executive Ted Turner. The organization is governed by an international board of directors with members from China, France, India, Japan, Jordan, Pakistan, Russia, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

From 1972 to 1996, Nunn served as a U.S. senator and, together with Senator Richard Lugar, proposed legislation creating the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program in 1991. It provides assistance to Russia and the former Soviet republics to secure and destroy their excess nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. (See related article (

<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=February&x=20050202174313dmslahrellek0.221142> ).)

Nunn explained that under the NTI vision, the nuclear fuel reserve would be maintained by the IAEA as a backup source for countries choosing to develop nuclear power by purchasing fuel from other countries, foregoing the development of nuclear enrichment facilities. Should these countries face disruptions to their fuel supply, the IAEA then would step in to provide the needed nuclear fuel.

"We believe this concept is urgent because many nations are seeking nuclear energy to meet their development needs and are weighing available options to determine what will be the most secure and most economical way to ensure a reliable supply of nuclear fuel," Nunn said.

The fuel bank can help reassure these developing nations that they will have ready access to fuel if they pursue nuclear energy in accordance with their international treaty obligations.

By reducing the overall number of new enrichment facilities, the international community also better can ensure the safety of nuclear materials and technologies, thereby preventing their possible misdirection into weapons.

American businessman and philanthropist Warren Buffett contributed to the fund, calling it an "investment in a safer world."

However, Nunn said that NTI's contribution has two conditions that must be met within two years: first, the IAEA must take the necessary actions to approve establishment of the nuclear fuel reserve; and, second, IAEA member nations must contribute an additional \$100 million or provide an equivalent value of fuel-grade uranium to help establish the reserve.

"We must find new and better answers to the imperative of the nuclear age," Nunn said. "We believe these dangers are urgent and that is why we at NTI are stepping forward. It is now up to governments to act and to act decisively."

The State Department's press office says that the United States welcomes and supports the NTI initiative to establish an IAEA fuel reserve. A similar concept was presented to IAEA earlier this year by the United States, together with France, Russia, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

U.S. Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman addressed the IAEA conference September 19, saying an international mechanism to assure an adequate supply of reactor fuel is critical both to meeting the world's energy needs and to advancing nonproliferation goals.

For more information, see Arms Control and Non-Proliferation ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international\\_security/arms\\_control.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/arms_control.html) ).

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Byliner: Clarifying U.S. Treaty Obligations a Good Step, Says Negroponte  
(Op-ed column on by U.S. director of national intelligence) (560)

The following byliner by U.S. Director of National Intelligence John D. Negroponte was published in the September 19 edition of USA Today and is in the public domain. There are no republication restrictions.

(begin byliner)

Support U.S. Intelligence  
By John D. Negroponte

Clarifying our treaty obligations would not harm nation's troops.

One critical way to help prevent terrorist attacks against Americans is interrogating key al-Qaeda leaders and operatives. The Bush administration has proposed a bill that would allow the CIA to conduct such interrogations -- interrogations that have helped stop terrorist attacks -- in a way that gives our personnel clear legal standards.

The simple question, therefore, is whether we will allow intelligence professionals on the front lines to keep using a tool that has saved American lives.

The current debate centers on legal questions concerning Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. In June, the Supreme Court determined that Common Article 3 applies to al-Qaeda terrorists.

The administration is committed to complying with the law of the land, and we must ensure our laws provide clarity on the vague standards contained in Common Article 3, such as "outrages upon personal dignity." Thus, the president has asked that Congress clarify our treaty obligations just as it has done on many other occasions. Absent such clarification, our intelligence professionals would be subject to unpredictable legal interpretations, including those of foreign courts. This vital program cannot go forward unless the law is clarified.

The administration's proposal would not redefine Common Article 3. It would provide clarity by mirroring language written by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and passed by Congress less than a year ago as part of the Detainee Treatment Act.

Under this approach, our intelligence professionals would know what they can and can't do because the standard would be one that is well established in U.S. law as determined by U.S. courts.

Clarifying our laws would not jeopardize our troops. Lawful combatants such as U.S. soldiers would continue to be fully protected by all aspects of the Geneva Conventions. Nothing in the administration's proposal in any way would undercut these fundamental protections. The issue we are debating is the standard of treatment for unlawful combatants -- those who hide among civilian populations and plot attacks on innocents.

The CIA needs to interrogate al-Qaeda operatives to gather intelligence where traditional questioning tactics do not work. The program has in the past helped us foil several publicly disclosed plots, including attacks on tall buildings in the USA, a U.S. Marine base in East Africa, the American consulate in Pakistan and Britain's Heathrow Airport.

Once intelligence has been obtained, terrorists can be brought to justice. The administration's proposal would provide for the trial of terrorists in a way that ensures that sensitive intelligence sources and methods -- which must remain secret to be effective against other terrorists in the future -- are not provided to the terrorists themselves.

As President Bush reminded the nation, it is "vital that our folks on the front line have the tools necessary to protect the American people." We are prepared to work with Congress to ensure this remains the case.

(John D. Negroponte is Director of National Intelligence.)

(end byliner)

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\*WPD404 09/21/2006

Mideast Quartet Endorses Palestinian Leader's Efforts  
(Rice says Palestinian government must be committed to peace) (720)

By Judy Aita  
Washington File United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- The Quartet for Middle East peace September 20 endorsed the efforts of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to form a government of national unity and recognized the need to continue humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

The Quartet -- the United Nations, the European Union (EU), Russia and the United States -- "discussed and indeed welcomed the efforts of [Mahmoud Abbas] to deal with the difficult circumstances in the Palestinian Territories," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said after the meeting. "We noted again the importance of the formation of a Palestinian government that would be devoted to and respectful of the principles of the Quartet."

"[Y]ou cannot have peace if you do not recognize the right of the other partner to exist and that the renunciation of violence is a key to negotiations," Rice said. "If indeed there is going to be a government that is able to govern, it needs the support of the international community and it needs to be committed to peace."

After a three-hour meeting, representatives of the Quartet -- U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Rice, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Finnish Foreign Minister Erkki Tuomioja, EU Representative Javier Solana and European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner -- issued an official statement reaffirming its "commitment to the road map as the means to realize the goal of two democratic states -- Israel and Palestine -- living side by side in peace and security."

"The Quartet welcomed the efforts of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to form a government of national unity, in the hope that the platform of such a government would reflect Quartet principles and allow for early engagement," the group said in an official statement issued after the meeting on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

The Quartet called for a three-month extension and the expansion of the "temporary international mechanism" created in June to channel aid to the Palestinians without going through the Hamas-led government. It also encouraged greater donor support to meet the needs of the Palestinian people, especially on security-sector reform, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and economic development. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Jun/19-668963.html> ).)

The Quartet also endorsed Annan's initiative to have James Wolfensohn, former World Bank president, report on the economic and humanitarian situation.

It has been difficult for the Hamas-led Palestinian government to deliver on its promises for a better life for the Palestinian people, Rice said.

"The Palestinians need a government that is committed to the decadelong effort between Palestinians and Israelis to find a route to peace, to commitments that have been taken on behalf of the Palestinian people, and quite simply, to a set of agreements that the international community indeed supports," she said. "Until there is such, it's going to be very difficult for that government to function."

The statement is an indication of the strengthening of the common position among the members of the Quartet, a senior State Department official said. There is a realization collectively that the Hamas government is failing to meet its duties as a government and not subscribing to the principles of the Quartet. Those principles, reiterated in the communiqué, include the recognition of Israel's right to exist,

the renunciation of violence and acceptance of all existing agreements between Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, called the communiqué "a forthright statement of the criteria for any Palestinian government."

The official said the Hamas government has failed as yet to meet the standards set forth by the Quartet and shows no inclination to accept them.

The Quartet also encouraged Israel to consider transferring impounded Palestinian tax and customs revenue through the temporary international mechanism set up to improve the economic and humanitarian conditions in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel, which collects taxes and customs duties on goods destined for the Palestinian Territories, halted transfer of those tax revenues to the Palestinian government after Hamas took control earlier in 2006.

For further information, see The Middle East: A Vision for the Future ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle\\_east\\_north\\_africa/me\\_vision.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_vision.html) ).

Text ( <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2006/sg2116.doc.htm> ) of the Quartet statement is available on the U.N. Web site.

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NATO Supreme Commander Praises Progress of Afghan Army  
(Effective counternarcotics effort still needed, General Jones tells senators) (610)

Washington — Afghanistan's national army is the brightest spot in country's new democracy, NATO's supreme commander says.

"By far, the Afghan National Army is the most successful pillar of our reconstruction efforts to date," Marine General James Jones told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee September 21. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060713174027sjhtrop0.6064722> ).)

Military reform is one of the five pillars of Afghan security sector reform formally established in April 2002 at a donors' conference in Geneva, Switzerland. The United States agreed to be the lead country in promoting military reform; Germany did the same for police reform; Japan agreed to head the task of disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating ex-combatants; Italy agreed to be the lead for judicial reform; and the United Kingdom stepped forward on counternarcotics efforts.

"[T]raining the police forces, jump-starting the judicial reform, and developing an effective counternarcotics program are, hand-in-hand, three of the most important things that need to be done in Afghanistan in the near future," Jones said.

Despite some progress in the development of an Afghan national police force, Jones said he believes much more needs to be done to assure adequate training, equipment and pay, to provide greater numbers of officers, and to prevent corruption.

"[W]e need more emphasis on this very important pillar," of the country's democratic future he added.

Jones said that reforming the Afghan justice system, though not NATO's responsibility in Afghanistan, "is one of the pillars that needs -- probably -- the most attention in the shortest amount of time." Courts and



prosecutors "remain distrusted, overly corrupt and resource-starved," though some progress has been made, he told senators.

Jones said that in a recent meeting with the Afghan attorney general, he learned that prosecutors' pay averages \$65 per month, while a judge makes less than \$300 per month. By contrast, he said, an interpreter working for the United Nations in Afghanistan earns 500 euros per month; apartments in the capital of Kabul rent for \$150-to-\$200 per month; and the Taliban is said to pay young people who support its military operations \$250 per month.

"This is simply a situation that cannot be allowed to stand if we're serious about judicial reform," Jones said. "With such disincentive, temptation for corrupt practices will continue."

The problem that Jones said worries him most is the lure of narcotics. Afghanistan, he said, "is unfortunately well on its way" to being a "narco-state."

He said U.N. estimates gauge this year's crop at nearly 60 percent above previous yields, which he described as "a situation that is going in the wrong direction." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060901153625mlenuhret0.9886438> ).)

"We need to find the right means to ensure that farmers can economically grow and sell legal produce," he said.

Afghanistan is no longer a failed state, he said, but it is still "a fragile state."

To ensure long-term success, Jones said, "efforts must be significantly increased" in the fields of education, agriculture and public health, with grater emphasis on economic development and government services.

"[T]he ultimate success in Afghanistan is not simply a military one," Jones said. "We are working with the international community and the Karzai government to make sure that our military efforts are immediately followed very quickly with reconstruction and development activities."

He added that by voting in two national elections the Afghans showed they understand the effort required and are eager "to see the benefits of their new-found freedoms and opportunities."

For more information, see Rebuilding Afghanistan ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding\\_afghanistan.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan.html) ).

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\*WPD406 09/21/2006

Iraqi Military Takes Charge of Dhi Qar Province

(Transfer of security to Iraqis another sign of progress, say U.S. officials) (570)

By David McKeeby

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Coalition forces have turned over security responsibilities for a second southern Iraqi province in what U.S. officials called "another sign of progress toward a stable and secure Iraq."

In a September 21 ceremony, the responsibility for safeguarding the people of Dhi Qar was returned to the Iraqi government and its civilian-controlled security forces.

"After decades of dictatorship and oppression, the Iraqi people have taken another step toward security self-reliance," U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and Multi-National Force – Iraq commander Army General George W. Casey said in a joint statement. "With the steadfast support of the coalition, Iraq is on a path to national unity, improved security, and increasing prosperity that benefits all its citizens," according to the statement.

Home to the ancient Mesopotamian city of Ur, Dhi Qar is especially significant to archeologists, historians and tourists. Among its landmarks is the Sumerian Ziggurat, an ancient temple built in 2000 B.C. It also is purported to be the birthplace of Abraham, who figures prominently in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Dhi Qar is the second southern Iraqi province in which Iraq forces have taken full control of security. Since July 13, local police and military forces in neighboring al Muthanna province also have had full responsibility for the province's security and have planned and executed their own operations, independent of coalition assistance. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060713150348MLenuhreT0.6914179> ).)

Since 2003, a coalition task force led by 1,500 Italian troops, along with Romanian, Australian and some British soldiers, has worked closely with the local government in Dhi Qar to train and equip Iraqi army and police units in the area. In addition, they advise local government officials as well as support public works and construction projects, such as building and repairing schools and medical clinics.

Iraqi and coalition officials agreed on the transfer after assessing the overall security situation in the province, the capability of area Iraqi army and police units to maintain security and the provincial leadership's ability to take the lead in providing services to local citizens.

The officials said several other Iraqi provinces also are close to meeting these criteria and will be transferred in the near future.

While the Iraqis will gain a new level of self-reliance in the province, coalition military and police advisers will remain available to support both the security forces and efforts to build the local economy, which will be the bedrock of Iraq's long-term security, they said.

"As Iraq develops and its needs continue to evolve, so too will the nature of international assistance and investment. The United States remains committed to the development of Dhi Qar province by providing funding for additional humanitarian relief and reconstruction projects," the U.S. officials said.

The statement also said the United States has contributed nearly \$14 million toward the province's revitalization under its Economic Support Fund and the Commander's Emergency Relief Program.

At the ceremony, coalition officials and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said they hope to transfer security responsibilities in all 18 of the country's provinces to Iraqis by the end of 2008.

The text ( [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=5823&Itemid=109](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5823&Itemid=109) ) of the Khalilzad-Casey Statement is available from the Multi-National Force – Iraq Web site.

For more information, see Iraq Update ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle\\_east\\_north\\_africa/iraq.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html) ).

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\*WPD407 09/21/2006

Troop Levels in Afghanistan To Remain Steady Through February

(Success in Afghanistan will require bringing drug trade under control) (600)

By Jacquelyn S. Porth  
Washington File Security Affairs Writer

Washington – The commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan says he expects troop levels there to remain steady until February 2007.

Afghanistan remains “the target of international terrorists, militant extremists, drug traffickers, and a determined criminal element,” Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry said September 21.

Eikenberry, commander of the Combined Forces in Afghanistan, told reporters during a brief visit to the Pentagon that the enemy’s influence no longer is especially strong across the country, although there are areas of increased violence, particularly in the south and southeastern parts of the nation where the Afghan government has less control.

Mostly, he said, the forces of the coalition, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Afghan government prevail whenever they encounter the enemy on the battlefield. “The challenge we face is not one of a military nature,” Eikenberry said.

Instead, the officer said, the real challenge in Afghanistan is to strengthen and extend the authority of the Afghan government, develop the economy and help build a civil society. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=May&x=20060510174943idybeekcm0.8316004> ).)

Recent and ongoing combat missions, such as operations Medusa, Mountain Fury, and Mountain Thrust, are part of a broader, longer-term goal in Afghanistan that Eikenberry described as strengthening good governance as well as “establishing the rule of law and facilitating reconstruction and economic development.” (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060918160151idybeekcm0.9616358> ).)

Concrete improvements in the lives of people can be as influential as any combat operation, he said. “This emphasis on government and development is the centerpiece” of the coalition’s and NATO’s overall approach in Afghanistan, Eikenberry said.

This means fostering interaction between provincial reconstruction teams and local leaders, extending medical assistance to those without access to health care and building schools and roads. “In a campaign such as this, the construction of roads and schools can be just as decisive, if not more, than military action,” he said.

Eikenberry called on the international community to do more to support the nonmilitary side of assisting Afghanistan.

Following the July transfer of Regional Command South from the coalition to NATO’s International Security Assistance Force, Eikenberry said, plans are under way to ensure a seamless transfer of Regional Command East to ISAF in late 2007. He emphasized the ongoing commitment of the United States to Afghanistan, even as this transition is under way.

The U.S. military will continue to train and equip Afghan national security forces, Eikenberry said. Currently, 76,000 Afghan army and police are trained, equipped and conducting security operations.

#### SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN MEANS DEALING WITH NARCO-TRAFFICKING

Success in the country cannot be attained, Eikenberry said, “without eventually bringing the narco-trafficking problem that Afghanistan faces under control.” He said, however, that the military’s role is

limited to providing specialized support such as intelligence or medical evacuation to local law enforcement.

What is needed, Eikenberry said, is to eradicate poppy crops, offer alternatives for poppy farmers and establish a solid judicial system.

The elimination of narco-trafficking is crucial because it poses a danger to government officials who can be corrupted by the large sums of money associated with it, and because there is a risk of that money being channeled into support for terrorism. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060920172756adynned0.4440729> ).)

While offering Thailand as an example of a country that has overcome its narco-trafficking problems successfully, Eikenberry said it took two decades of sustained commitment by the Thais and the international community to bring the problem under control.

For more information, see Rebuilding Afghanistan ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding\\_afghanistan.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan.html) ).

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\*WPD408 09/21/2006  
U.S. Helps Establish Sustainable Fisheries in Bangladesh  
(Partnership for a Better Life) (510)

Shafiqul Islam knows that there will be ample fish for him to catch in the wetlands of his homeland, Bangladesh, for years to come, thanks to a project sponsored by the United States.

Shafiqul is president of the Kewta Beel Resource Management Organization (RMO), established in 2000 with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The RMO manages Kewta Beel, one of many beels -- large, shallow bodies of water formed mainly from surface water runoff -- found all over Bangladesh.

Through the government of Bangladesh, USAID funds MACH -- Management of Aquatic Ecosystems Through Community Husbandry -- a program that aims to demonstrate that wetlands resources can be managed sustainably with the participation of those who use and have an interest in them.

The floodplains of Bangladesh form one of the world's most important wetlands areas and are home to hundreds of species of unique plants, fish, birds and other wildlife. Most important, they are a source of income and nutrition for millions of Bangladeshis.

The wetlands fishery plays a vital role in cushioning rural poverty and supplying animal protein to the poor in Bangladesh and is also an integral part of the culture and lifestyle of the people. But over the years, overuse of wetlands and changes in water use practices both inside and outside the country have threatened the productivity and diversity of plant and animal life in many of these areas.

MACH's program, which has been implemented by U.S.-based Winrock International ( <http://winrock.org/fact/facts.asp?CC=5498&bu=9055> ) and three local nongovernmental organizations in several field sites in Bangladesh, advocates a multidisciplinary, multisector and participatory process of planning, implementation and monitoring for sustainable wetland resource management.

"We want the projects that we have implemented here to succeed," Shafiqul says of his group's efforts. "We've been given this opportunity to develop our wetlands and our lives. We won't waste it."

In managing the local wetland of Kewta Beel in the Kansha Malijee basin district, the RMO's members set fishing regulations on behalf of the community and augment the fish diversity by reintroducing lost species back into the beel.

Using RMO-managed fish sanctuaries in the beel, they have reintroduced 10 previously nearly extinct species of fish and put more than 25,000 individual fish back into the beel.

Shafiqul says restocking will not end when MACH's involvement is complete. "Someday we hope to start our own nursery," he says.

The RMO also plans to excavate the beel and double its number of sanctuaries from four to eight. The sanctuaries allow the fish population to thrive, as they live untouched there throughout the year.

The RMO takes an active role in informing the community about its activities.

"I feel proud when I hear others talk of the benefits," says RMO member Abdul Mannan Munshi. "This is noble but difficult work, and if we want to succeed, we need all the people to hear us and we need all of the people behind us."

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\*WPD409 09/21/2006

U.S. Urges Unfettered Political Participation in Thailand  
(State Department reiterates call for democratic rule) (280)

By Jane Morse  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.S. Department of State is calling for a return to democratic rule in Thailand and "unfettered" participation for media and all political parties.

Briefing reporters September 21, State Department acting spokesman Tom Casey said, "[T]here must be a swift return to democratic rule. [W]e do want to see a handover to civilian authorities as quickly as possible." (See related story ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060920182200bpuh0.9690973> ).)

Casey called reports that coup leaders have banned political activities in Thailand "a setback."

Control of Thailand's government institutions was seized on September 19 by a group calling itself the Committee for Democratic Reform under the Monarchy as Head of State. This "committee" has declared martial law, pledged to name a civilian caretaker prime minister within two weeks, write a new constitution, and hold elections by October 2007.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra was in New York attending the start of the United Nations' 61st General Assembly session at the time of the coup.

Thailand's aid from the United States is in jeopardy because of the coup, Casey said. Under Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Act for fiscal year 2006, appropriated funds may not be used to assist the government of any country whose duly elected head has been deposed by military coup or decree.

Approximately \$14 million in bilateral assistance has been earmarked for Thailand for the current fiscal year. Casey said a review is under way to determine which programs may be affected by the restrictions spelled out in Section 508.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Democracy ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy.html> ) and East Asia and the Pacific ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/> ).

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\*WPD410 09/21/2006

Indonesia Finds New Resource for Clean, Safe Drinking Water  
(Partnership for a Better Life) (500)

A major earthquake in Indonesia's Central Java region in May 2006 left hundreds of thousands homeless and living in tight temporary quarters. Contaminated water was a big concern in places where sanitary conditions broke down.

In such conditions, diseases spread easily and ordinary activities, like getting clean drinking water, become nearly impossible. Waterborne diseases from contaminated sources threaten to kill even more victims than the initial disaster.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) recognized that providing potable water to earthquake-affected people in Indonesia was critical to both short-term survival and to helping establish safe and sanitary living conditions.

Using a simple technology, USAID and its partners worked to ensure that the 200,000 affected people had access to clean water. With just a few drops of Air RahMat, a water purification solution, contaminated water quickly became potable.

USAID first introduced this inexpensive, yet effective water treatment following a cyclone that struck West Timor in February 2004. That effort was so effective that Air RahMat has played a big role in all of USAID's subsequent relief efforts. When disaster strikes, effective distribution of Air RahMat can guarantee access to safe drinking water to tens of thousands of families for a fraction of the cost of supplying bottled water.

People affected by the earthquake are grateful. By eliminating one of the major problems they face, they are one step closer to regaining stability and thinking about what it will take to rebuild.

"This is not only helpful for poor people, but also for those among us who are not so poor," said Hindun, a member of a prayer group that is spreading the word about the affordable solution. Air RahMat is an affordable, practical, user-friendly water treatment technology for treating contaminated water and preventing disease, suitable for use at home.

In the Indonesian language, "air" means water and "rahmat" means blessing. Hence the blended name, Air RahMat, or "blessed water."

More than 100 million people in Indonesia lack access to safe drinking water. Even in places where water is piped into homes, that water is not necessarily safe. Indonesian women know that to protect their children from diarrhea, the number two cause of death among Indonesian children under 5, they must find safe water. They boil contaminated water or buy bottled water. Gathering enough fuel for boiling is time-consuming and expensive.

One of the partners in USAID's Indonesia clean water program is a Muslim women's prayer group called Pengajian Ass-Sallam in Tanjung Priok, north Jakarta.

Some group members, like Hindun, have been using Air RahMat for several months. Others want to buy it. A halal certificate from the Indonesian council of Ulama, a group of Muslim leaders, has certified official religious approval for its use. The USAID program also is approaching nontraditional retailers for opportunities to distribute the product. The price is very reasonable.

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\*WPD411 09/21/2006

Proposed Law Called Threat to Free Civil Society in Venezuela  
(U.S. says measure denies independence of nongovernmental groups) (780)

By Eric Green  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- An international group advocating transparency in government has joined the United States in denouncing a proposed law in Venezuela that the measure's opponents say would restrict the freedom of civil society in the South American nation.

In a September 12 statement, Berlin-based Transparency International said the "Law on International Cooperation," currently being discussed in Venezuela's National Assembly, raises concern about civil society's ability to function without "stifling" Venezuelan government control. The U.S State Department had raised concerns about the proposed law in June.

Transparency International said that if enacted, the proposal, by restricting civil society, would harm Venezuela's "most vulnerable citizens."

The group said the bill would require all organizations in Venezuela to register with the government of President Hugo Chávez, and its "scope would be defined directly by the presidency under a regulation outside of legislative procedure."

Transparency International said fighting corruption and demanding transparency and accountability in all sectors of society require autonomy for such groups. It added that with the passage of this law, the group's Venezuelan chapter, Transparencia Venezuela, "would be severely limited in its anti-corruption programs."

In addition, the group said the proposed law would increase existing regulation of nongovernmental local and international organizations, subject civil society to "considerable restrictions, with government allowed to interfere in their objectives, activities and funding sources."

Another part of the bill is said to call for establishing a "Fund for International Cooperation and Assistance." Transparency International said it is "unclear" in the draft before the Venezuelan national assembly "whether funds received by civil society would end up being managed by the government through this fund."

The U.S. State Department has said the law, approved on a "first reading" by the Venezuelan National Assembly June 14, is designed to give the Venezuelan government new legal tools "to further restrict freedom of association" in Venezuela. The assembly has indicated there will be "consultations" before final passage of the measure.

In a June statement, the State Department said the law would establish a state administrative body "exclusively dedicated to regulating the activities" of NGOs. The law, said the department, "denies the private, independent nature of NGOs, creating a new kind of organization described as a 'public non-state entity.'"

If the proposal were enacted, the Venezuelan government would recognize only "those organizations that abide by its strict requirements to disclose all information regarding its activities, sources of funding, and internal records." The department said the proposal would allow the Venezuelan government "to conduct audits of the organizations arbitrarily."

The department added that the proposed measure mirrors a law enacted by Russia in January, which, among other things, allows the Russian Justice Ministry's Federal Registration Service "to conduct check-ups on NGOs to monitor their activities." The Russian law has been condemned universally by human rights groups, said the department. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=January&x=200601271541201CJsamohT0.4548456> ).)

The department said Venezuela's government "routinely harasses" Venezuelan NGOs, and is pursuing criminal charges against an NGO electoral watchdog group called Súmate for alleged "conspiracy to overthrow the republican form of government" for receiving a grant of \$31,000 from a private, nonprofit Washington-based group called the National Endowment for Democracy.

The State Department calls civil society an "integral part of the Summit of the Americas process." The department said the U.S. government works to include civil society organizations from throughout the Western Hemisphere in meetings of experts and ministers on summit themes, such as trade, security, health care, labor, education, disaster management and the environment. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/Archive/2005/Jan/11-264226.html> ).)

Another nongovernmental group called Connectas Human Rights, based in São Paulo, Brazil, has said the Venezuelan government intends to use the proposed legislation as a "tool to repress, control, and silence the activities of independent civil society" in Venezuela.

Connectas said in a statement released in June the proposal "if executed as written, may seriously limit the operation within Venezuela of independent nongovernmental organizations." Particularly affected, said Connectas, would be organizations involved in human rights, the environment, HIV-AIDS and other global health issues, sustainable economic and social development concerns and independent trade unions.

The human rights group, Civicus: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, said in an August 7 statement that if implemented in its current form, the Venezuelan law would "erode many of the gains made by civil society" in the South American nation.

For more on U.S. policy, see Venezuela ([http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/andean\\_region/venezuela.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/wh/americas/andean_region/venezuela.html) ).

The September 12 Transparency International statement ([http://www.transparency.org/news\\_room/latest\\_news/press\\_releases/2006/2006\\_09\\_12\\_action\\_venezuela](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/latest_news/press_releases/2006/2006_09_12_action_venezuela) ) is available on its Web site.

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\*WPD412 09/21/2006  
U.S. Organization Helps People in Honduras Access Clean Water



(Partnership for a Better Life) (530)

Ten years ago, for women of San Antonio Valle, a small farming community in rural Honduras, getting clean water for their families meant carrying heavy water vessels over a long distance. Imagining there could be a better way, the community approached WaterPartners International, an American nonprofit organization, for help.

In three years, with WaterPartners' help, a new water system was established firmly enough that the organization could leave the management to the community on its own. Seven years later, WaterPartners staff members went back to the little community to check on the project.

San Antonio Valle's water project is only one of many clean water projects around the world carried out by WaterPartners International, established in 1993 by two university students in the U.S. state of North Carolina.

"Entering the community meeting space, we found the entire community gathered, organized and awaiting our arrival to tell us all about their experiences with their water system since WaterPartners had left," wrote organization staff member Michaela Meckel in a message from the field.

"Speaking with community members, it became quickly clear that in the years since WaterPartners had left, the entire community had taken full ownership of [its] water system, organizing themselves to make repairs when needed, practicing regular system maintenance, even purchasing the land surrounding their water source . . . and working to reforest the land to further protect their water source for future generations."

"They spoke excitedly," she wrote, "even seven years later, about the joys of leaving their heavy water jugs and tired backs behind. Not only the water system but the community itself had clearly thrived over these seven years.

"As we finished interviewing community members and began preparing to leave San Antonio Valle once again, I could clearly see that we were not leaving a WaterPartners project behind for this community to look after. Instead, we were leaving San Antonio Valle's project as we had left it seven years before, firmly in the hands of this strong and capable community, the best way we can hope to leave a community."

San Antonio Valle before the WaterPartners project mirrored the situation of more than 1 billion people in the developing world who do not have access to a safe and adequate water supply.

Millions of hours are spent each day by women and girls who must walk to collect water from distant, often polluted sources. Many major diseases in developing countries are water- and sanitation-related -- including diarrhea, the leading cause of child death.

WaterPartners promotes innovative and cost-effective community water projects that enable communities to take the lead in solving their own water supply problems and that have the greatest chance for long-term success. It also helps people understand the effect of safe water -- which it calls "life's most basic commodity" -- on the quality of life.

"We envision the day when everyone in the world can take a safe drink of water," the organization says on its Web site ( <http://www.water.org/> ). "Creating accessible, safe water supplies in developing countries liberates people to live healthier, fuller, more productive lives."

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\*WPD413 09/21/2006

Remote Senegal Island Welcomes Safe Drinking Water  
(Partnership for a Better Life) (460)

Abdou Diatta has a new task on Senegal's remote island of Carabane. He guards the pump that brings safe drinking water to residents of the former Casamance region's colonial capital. From morning to night, he opens the gate and unlocks the pump to allow people to fill their buckets and bottles. Some stop by just for a drink. It is hard for people here to believe that this water will not make them sick.

For decades, the 500 people living on Carabane Island -- an old stopover along a slave trade route to the Americas -- have brought drinking water over from the mainland. Motorized canoes, called pirogues, hauled it in from Elinkine, a small town about a half hour away. Elinkine's clean water supply was a result of assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which helped rehabilitate the town's two wells. For the people of Carabane, water carried over to the island costs 60 cents for 20 liters - or about \$35 a month for a family of 10. Rice farmers and fishermen could not afford this, so they chose to risk getting intestinal diseases and other illnesses from contaminated local water. And many did.

Village chief Ibrahima Gueye was one of them. He had searched for solutions to the water problem for a long time when he learned of a USAID project for training local technicians and craftsmen to manufacture pumps. After raising some funds, he hired some of these technicians to construct a pump for the community. A month later they installed a pump they made from an old motor scooter wheel, plastic pipes and other locally available parts.

"Since we've had this pump, diseases related to contaminated water have disappeared and potable water is available for all," said Gueye, who added that getting the pump built and installed has been his greatest success as a village chief.

Water samples were sent to Dakar and France for testing and the results confirmed the water's safety. The pump is so popular that the good news traveled swiftly by pirogue to the nearby islands of Diogu , Kassel, Saloulou and Niomoune, which have requested the locally produced pumps. The craftsmen have constructed and sold 90 pumps and 100 tube wells since 2004, benefiting more than 7,000 people. With their new know-how, local manufacturers are helping every day to deliver a potable water supply for Senegalese villages.

"I'm very proud of this pump. Before, my family couldn't afford to buy water from the mainland, but now we have good, clean water -- for free. My family comes here to fill up every day, and we've never had a stomach ache drinking this water," said Binta Seck, a mother of six.

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\*WPD414 09/21/2006

Kosovo Status Talks at Crucial Stage, Contact Group Says  
(Officials reaffirm support for negotiated settlement in 2006) (670)

By Jeffrey Thomas  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- With talks over Kosovo's final status at a "crucial stage," a group of government officials known as the Contact Group met September 20 and reaffirmed its commitment to a negotiated settlement for the province before the end of 2006. The group also warned both Serbia and Kosovo that neither party can block the status process from advancing.

Meeting in New York on the sidelines of the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, the Contact Group officials — representing France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — were joined by the NATO secretary-general and officials from the European Union and the United Nations, including U.N. Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice served as chair of the group.

The Contact Group, which has coordinated international action in the Balkans since 1994, reaffirmed its support for Ahtisaari, who has been leading the talks over the future status of Kosovo.

The United Nations has administered Kosovo since 1999, when U.S. and NATO-led military forces fought and expelled Yugoslav Serb troops and police following human-rights abuses against the province's majority ethnic Albanian population. As many as half of Kosovo's ethnic Serbs are believed to have fled since the fighting, and NATO forces today protect minority-Serb communities and religious sites. Serbs maintain that Kosovo is central to their cultural heritage because of its historic sites and shrines.

Kosovo could emerge from the U.N.-sponsored talks as an independent country or retain its status as an autonomous province of Serbia, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has said.

In a short briefing after the Contact Group meeting, Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Fried said the ministers "expressed, with unanimity and considerable conviction, support for his [Ahtisaari's] efforts."

Fried said he wanted to emphasize a few points made in the joint statement issued after the meeting by the Contact Group: "Ministers reaffirmed their commitment that all possible efforts be made to achieve a negotiated settlement in the course of 2006. In other words, they are adhering to the timeline of seeking to chart the way forward this year."

He added that the Contact Group "also agreed that striving for a negotiated settlement should not obscure the fact that neither party can unilaterally block the status process from advancing."

"That's a very important point of agreement" by the Contact Group, Fried said.

Fried said the government ministers also urged the "quasi-government in Kosovo to accelerate the efforts to implement U.N.-endorsed standards."

The standards, first outlined by the United Nations in 2002, include functioning democratic institutions, rule of law, freedom of movement, refugee return, economic progress, respect for property rights, dialogue with Belgrade, and a properly constituted Kosovo Protection Corps with minority participation.

In addition, the ministers "called on Belgrade to cease its obstruction of Kosovo Serb participation in Kosovo's institutions," Fried said. Belgrade is the capital of Serbia.

The Contact Group's statement voices support for "a realistic outcome that enhances regional stability, is acceptable to the people of Kosovo and preserves Kosovo's multi-ethnic character."

The statement also says the ministers "encouraged the Special Envoy to prepare a comprehensive proposal for a status settlement and on this basis to engage the parties in moving the negotiating process forward."

"The ministers are determined to see this through," Fried said. "All the ministers expressed realism about the difficulties, but a determination to work together to advance this process."

"I think it's fair to say we were all satisfied with the meeting, the continued international determination to see this process through," he said.

A transcript ( <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/72893.htm> ) of Fried's briefing and the text ( <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/72892.htm> ) of the Kosovo Contact Group Ministerial Statement are available on the State Department Web site.

For more information on U.S. policies in the region, see Southeast Europe ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe\\_eurasia/balkans.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe_eurasia/balkans.html) ).

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U.S., Europe Working Together To Combat Drug Trafficking  
(U.S. drug enforcement official outlines cooperation in addressing global threat) (480)

Washington -- Illicit drugs are a global menace, and the United States and Europe are working together to curb the increased flow of these drugs from South America to Europe, says Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Chief of Operations Michael Braun.

In September 21 testimony before two House subcommittees, Braun said that since the early 1990s, Europe has experienced a significant increase in the amount of cocaine trafficked from South America. DEA investigations have shown that the same Colombian organizations that are smuggling cocaine to Europe are also smuggling to the United States, so it is "vitally important" that the United States and Europe coordinate their counternarcotics efforts, he added.

To this end, Braun said, the DEA has forged a strong and cooperative relationship with its European counterparts, maintaining offices in 11 European countries with approximately 60 DEA employees. As an example of this cooperation, Braun pointed to Operation Twin Ocean, a three-year effort. And as part of this effort, he said, the DEA worked with law enforcement agencies in Colombia, Panama, Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Spain and Great Britain to arrest more than 100 individuals, and seize more than 47 tons of cocaine and nearly \$70 million in assets in May.

Braun explained that the DEA has a particularly close relationship with the United Kingdom's Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA), with numerous ongoing joint operations as well as the recent completion of Operation White Dollar. As part of this operation, the DEA and SOCA worked with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as well as Colombian and Canadian officials to dismantle an international money-laundering ring that laundered millions of Colombian drug dollars in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The operation resulted in 34 arrests and the forfeiture of \$20 million in laundered funds, Braun said.

The DEA is also active in other parts of Europe, Braun said. He pointed out that the DEA has two special agents with the Royal Dutch National Police National Crime Squad in the Netherlands, and said the DEA and Spanish law enforcement also continuously are working on joint investigations into cocaine smuggling.

These and other DEA's collaborative efforts with its European counterparts will continue as part of the Bush administration's strategy to address the global menace of illicit drugs, Braun said.

"We recognize that interagency and multinational cooperation are essential elements of the president's National Drug Control Strategy, and these cooperative efforts are the best way for us to dismantle and disrupt international drug-trafficking organizations," he said. "DEA will continue to work tirelessly to enhance the effectiveness of our enforcement operations in order to curtail the flow of drugs to both the United States and Europe."

The text ( <http://www.dea.gov/pubs/cngrtest/ct092106.html> ) of Braun's statement is available on the DEA Web site.

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\*WPD416 09/21/2006

U.S. Researcher Urges Measurable Information War on Extremism  
(Marshall Center speaker discusses Cold War-style information strategies) (710)

By Vince Crawley  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- A U.S. government analyst proposes using Cold War-style information and containment strategies to prevent the spread of Islamic extremism, and recommends immediate action to start gathering data on public diplomacy efforts in Muslim communities worldwide.

The world is at "a major crossroads in history," said Raphael Perl, a specialist in international affairs for the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service (CRS), which provides analytical reports for the U.S. Congress.

"The effectiveness of our efforts in combating extremist ideologies may, to a large extent, shape the future political and economic landscape of the world," Perl said in a September 15 conference at the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirche, Germany.

"If we fail to confront and contain the threat" of extremist ideologies, "a new intolerant, radical, violence-prone political order may become the democratically elected norm in many important countries," Perl warned. The theme of the Marshall Center conference was Countering Ideological Support for Terrorism. Perl stressed that some of his views included statements of personal opinion and independence research that do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the U.S. government.

The Bush administration has set forth the concept of "pre-emptive strikes against terrorism," Perl said. He added, "We need pre-emptive strikes in an ideological sense as well."

He recommended an immediate program to start identifying public diplomacy programs and developing meaningful ways to measure their effect, resources and personnel.

Examples of measurable resources and progress include:

- The number of U.S. government employees overseas who are fully fluent in the languages of their host countries. "When I say fluent," Perl said, "I mean as fluent in that foreign language as Adel Al Jubair, the Saudi political adviser, is in English -- fluent enough to present or debate points of view on television against charismatic ideological adversaries."
- The numbers and grades of U.S. officials in the field whose specific duties include ideological countermeasures.
- The funding and staff levels of public diplomacy missions.
- The number of radio and television stations "which broadcast our message of freedom and tolerance, or which jam the broadcasts of extremist stations," Perl said.

- The number and intensity of extremist statements in a representative sample of mass media and in sermons at selected mosques. "If we don't have enough staffing even to make these measurements due to existing workload," Perl said, "that is a clear indication at the outset of a resource shortage."

In addition to measurable numbers, he called for ensuring that those who deal with foreign publics have been trained to counter extremist messages.

"Have our field officers studied the doctrine of Islamist extremism to the same extent that such officers previously studied communist ideology during the Cold War?" Perl asked. "Can officers debate extremist views by quoting the Quran as easily as they quote sound bites from the press guidance?" For example, Perl said, U.S. officials could debate whether terrorist leaders have adhered to the Quran's Sura 4, Verse 92, which discusses the payment of compensation when innocent Muslims mistakenly are killed.

"To be successful at public diplomacy, we need to offer a 'competitive product,'" Perl said. During the Cold War, "the West was united in opposition to totalitarian oppression" and "some people were willing to risk their lives to get to the West not just for the economic opportunity but for freedom." However, he said, the cultural circumstances are quite different in the struggle against extremism.

The adherents of Islamist extremism "abhor rather than admire Western culture and morals," he said. "A critical component of any strategy is to encourage debate within the ranks of Islam and within intellectual communities in Islamic populations over the wisdom or 'correctness' of radical extremist ideologies which claim their basis in religion."

Perl also said "academic discussions concerning the nature of programs and measurements [of public diplomacy efforts] have gone on too long already. There is no further benefit to further delay and, indeed, every reason to forge ahead as soon as possible. We can and should begin collecting data immediately."

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\*WPD417 09/21/2006

State's Yamamoto Cites U.S. Strategic Partnership with Ethiopia

(As ambassador, he would promote transparency in Ethiopia political process) (560)

By Jim Fisher-Thompson  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Ethiopia is one of the United States' most important partners because "it shares and supports many of our strategic goals on the [African] continent," Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Don Yamamoto told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee September 20. The committee is considering his nomination to be U.S. ambassador to Ethiopia.

Yamamoto, a 25-year veteran of the State Department's Foreign Service, has been the main official in State's Africa Bureau for Ethiopia/Eritrean border issues and has helped shepherd a Great Lakes peace effort called the Tripartite Process. He also has been involved in talks with the Chadian government about its relations with Sudan over the Darfur crisis and has helped to facilitate recent elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060731174731esnamfuak0.301037> ).)

Yamamoto told the Senate panel that at a time when the United States was pressed to furnish troops for the global War on Terror, Ethiopia is "a full participant in the President's East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative, and works closely with the United States and other partners in the region to fight terrorism."

It is also "the world's sixth largest troop contributor to peacekeeping operations, promoting regional stability," he added.

Still, "Ethiopia remains mired in a decadelong border dispute with Eritrea and faces difficult and pressing challenges at home" such as poverty and problems with political openness, Yamamoto said. These are very complex issues to tackle, but at least everyone is listening and dialogue is taking place, he said.

"Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has articulated the need for poverty eradication, job creation, and economic development. Promoting education and expanding access to quality health care are also primary goals of the Ethiopian government, which we share and are committed to supporting," he said.

In light of the Ethiopian government's harsh reaction to demonstrators following the May 2005 parliamentary elections, Yamamoto said, "the United States remains deeply concerned about Ethiopia's domestic political environment."

If confirmed by the full Senate, Yamamoto said he would work with Ethiopians to promote "an open and transparent electoral process, inclusion of all parts of society in the democratic process, engagement of all opposition parties to ensure full and dynamic participation in political decision-making, tolerance of dissent, an independent judiciary with transparent and accountable judicial processes, the consistent protection of human rights, and a free and responsible press."

An obstacle to progress, he told the Senate panel, was the ongoing trial of more than 100 opposition leaders and their supporters, civil society leaders, and journalists, which "continues to generate concerns about the future of Ethiopia's democratic development."

On the economic front, Yamamoto said he would continue to press for foreign assistance that already amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian, emergency, and development aid to Ethiopia each year.

"Our assistance aims to spur economic development, improve the availability and quality of health care, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, bolster education, and promote democratization and good governance in Ethiopia. We need to carefully coordinate in the interagency process and with other donors, to ensure that we are using these limited funds effectively and productively," he told the lawmakers.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Africa ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/af/> ).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
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\*WPD418 09/21/2006

Science Foundation Promotes Awareness of Polar Year

(International scientific event to initiate new era in polar science) (520)

Washington – The National Science Foundation is announcing an almost \$6 million campaign to support projects that will boost public interest and understanding of the International Polar Year (IPY), which begins in March 2007.

The International Council for Science (ICSU) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) are leading IPY at the international level, following the tradition of similar polar years in 1882 and 1932.

More than 100 countries will be involved in coordinated research and education activities to expand scientific knowledge about the Arctic and Antarctic regions, and to undertake projects more vast than could be undertaken by any single nation.

While scientific and research communities will play a major role in IPY activities, the goal also is to involve the public, educators and young people. The nine communication projects awarded NSF funding September 20 are all devoted to that end.

Institutions from El Paso, Texas, to Fairbanks, Alaska, will use the grants for such diverse purposes as taking university students to Antarctica research sites, underwriting media programs that highlight the unique polar regions, and nurturing a new generation of polar researchers who bring a cross-disciplinary approach to their work, according to a news release.

NSF Director Arden Bement said the new education grants, a part of a larger portfolio of NSF science and education initiatives for IPY, will stimulate interest in polar research and will help build a scientific legacy for future generations.

"This effort has the potential to create a legacy for decades, one that will benefit the nation as well as the science and engineering community more specifically," Bement said. "By linking the public's fascination with things polar to outreach that conveys the excitement of research and discovery, we can attract a new generation of Americans into science and engineering careers while contributing to a better informed public."

The U.S. Committee to the Polar Year, a group planning IPY activities, explains on its Web site that the poles are "inherently international terrain," because of the many shared national interests in these regions and their climatic effect on the Earth as a whole.

"The polar regions play key roles in global processes," according to the committee's Web site, "and are harbingers of change elsewhere, so what we learn here has important implications."

The Bush administration is advocating a \$55 million budget for research and education activities during the IPY, which will extend over two calendar years until 2009 allowing observations to occur through all seasons at both poles.

NSF is leading the U.S. research community in working with scientists supported by other agencies and countries in this project. Major areas of research will include Arctic environmental change, the influence of polar ice sheets on global phenomena, and organisms that live in the cold and dark.

The NSF press release ( [http://www.nsf.gov/news/news\\_summ.jsp?cntn\\_id=108008&org=NSF&from=news](http://www.nsf.gov/news/news_summ.jsp?cntn_id=108008&org=NSF&from=news) ) is available on its Web site.

More information also is available on the International Polar Year Web site ( <http://www.ipy.org/> ) and the Web site of the U.S. Committee to the Polar Year ( <http://www.us-ipy.org/> ).

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\*WPD419 09/21/2006

Space Station Construction Resumes with Successful Atlantis Mission  
(Shuttle program back to "normal operational tempo," says NASA administrator) (1100)

By Cheryl Pellerin  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Space shuttle Atlantis and its six-member STS-115 crew glided to a landing early on September 21 at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, completing a successful mission to resume construction of the International Space Station and a journey of 7.8 million kilometers.



The flight was the first in a series of missions that will be among the most complex in space history. Atlantis delivered the first major new component to the station since 2002 and laid the groundwork for upcoming station assembly missions.

"It's really a beautiful day in Florida, a great way to end the mission," said Commander Brent Jett, after performing a walk-around inspection of the vehicle with his fellow astronauts.

"It was a pretty tough few days for us, a lot of hard work," he added, "and a great team effort to get the station assembly restarted on a good note."

Jett's crewmembers were pilot Chris Ferguson and mission specialists Joe Tanner, Heidemarie Stefanyshyn-Piper, Dan Burbank and Steve MacLean -- a Canadian astronaut.

Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper called MacLean during the mission to congratulate him on being the first Canadian to operate Canadarm2, the station's Canadian-built robotic arm.

## STATION ASSEMBLY RESUMES

Atlantis launched September 9 and arrived at the station two days later. The crew delivered the P3/P4 integrated truss segment to the station and conducted three spacewalks mainly devoted to preparing the truss and its solar arrays for operation.

The 15.9-metric-ton truss will provide power and data services for the station. The solar arrays, unfurled September 14, span 73 meters and will double the station's power-generation capability when they are operational.

With Atlantis and its crew safely home, the stage is set for the next phase of space station assembly.

Preparations continue for space shuttle Discovery's launch, targeted for mid-December, on the STS-116 mission to deliver another truss segment and a cargo module to the station. Discovery also will do extensive work on the station's electrical and cooling systems.

"We're back into more of the normal operational tempo now," said NASA Administrator Mike Griffin during a post-landing press briefing in Florida.

"We've got data that we've never had before, we understand the tank and its issues and its performance better than we ever have before," he added. "I'm very confident that we will complete the assembly of the space station on schedule by 2010."

STS-115 was one of the most-photographed shuttle missions, with more than 100 high-definition, digital, video and film cameras documenting the launch and climb to orbit.

Data from these images, and station and shuttle crew inspections, helped clear Atlantis's thermal protection system for return 2.5 days after launch.

## THE MISSION

Tanner, Piper, Burbank and MacLean, with the help of crewmates, made three spacewalks that completed truss installation, enabled solar arrays to be deployed and prepared an important radiator for later activation.

They also installed a signal processor and transponder that transmits voice and data to the ground, and performed other tasks to upgrade and protect the station's systems.

A new procedure called a "camp out" was implemented, in which astronauts slept in the Quest airlock before their spacewalks.

The process shortens the "prebreathe" time, during which nitrogen is purged from the astronauts' systems and air pressure is lowered so the spacewalkers avoid a decompression illness called the "bends."

On each of the three spacewalks, the astronauts performed more than the number of scheduled activities.

The astronauts also did some unprecedented robotics work. They used the shuttle's robotic arm in a delicate maneuver to hand off the school-bus-sized truss to the station's arm. The 13.7-meter truss weighs 15,875 kilograms.

The arrays at the end of the truss extended to their full 73-meter wingspan once they unfurled on flight-day six. The astronauts also moved the station's arm to a position where it will help in the next phase of station construction.

## NEXT STEPS

After Atlantis undocked from the station, it did the first full fly-around of the facility since before the space shuttle Columbia accident in 2003. The maneuver helped ground crews get a better perspective on the station's environment and exterior health.

After undocking, the Atlantis crew participated in a first-ever three-way call with the Expedition 13 crew aboard the space station and the three crewmembers of the Soyuz spacecraft on its way to the station. All 12 astronauts in space at that time were able to have a conversation.

"We've had a lot of people on orbit this last week," said Lynn Cline, NASA deputy associate administrator for space operations. "In addition to STS-115 completing its mission this morning, on orbit right now we have Expedition 13 handing off to Expedition 14."

Commander Michael Lopez-Alegria and cosmonaut Mikhail Tyurin of the 14th International Space Station crew docked at the station in the early morning hours of September 20 to begin a six-month stay on the orbiting laboratory.

With Tyurin at the controls, their Soyuz TMA-9 spacecraft docked smoothly at the aft port of the Zvezda service module. They launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan early September 18.

With them was Iranian-American businesswoman Anousheh Ansari, the first female spaceflight participant -- a paying private space explorer -- to visit the station. She is flying under contract with Roscosmos, the Russian Federal Space Agency.

She will return to Earth September 28 with the Expedition 13 crew, commander Pavel Vinogradov and NASA science officer Jeff Williams, who welcomed the new arrivals. Expedition 13 launched to the station March 30.

The third Expedition 14 crewmember, European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Reiter of Germany, also greeted the new crewmembers. Reiter arrived at the station aboard Discovery on the STS-121 mission in July.

Reiter joined Expedition 13, bringing the number of station crewmembers to three for the first time since May 2003. He will remain on board as a member of the Expedition 14 crew.

"You'll also see, from the crew that we've had up there the last week, the exercise of our international partnership and how important that is to us, with a Russian, European and American crew on the station and a Canadian-American crew on the shuttle," Cline said.

"All these things help us learn to live and work in space, and do it on an international basis," she added.  
"It's a great foundation for our future exploration."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

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\*WPD420 09/21/2006

Text: Bush Sends Warm Greetings on Rosh Hashanah  
(Presidential Message on Rosh Hashanah) (160)

(begin text)

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
September 21, 2006

Presidential Message: Rosh Hashanah, 5767

I send greetings to those around the world celebrating Rosh Hashanah.

During these holy days, Jewish people begin the new year by answering the call of the Shofar and gathering in synagogues. It is a time to reflect on the past, celebrate the beginning of life, and welcome the promise of the future with a spirit of renewal and hope.

On this sacred holiday, I appreciate the Jewish people for your efforts to ensure that your values and traditions are passed on to future generations. As you begin the Days of Awe, your faith in the Almighty reminds us of the gift of religious freedom in our country and helps make the world a more hopeful place.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a peaceful Rosh Hashanah.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(end text)

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\*WPD421 09/21/2006

National Book Festival A Day for Book Lovers  
(Authors, readers, converge on National Mall) (190)

Washington -- The National Book Festival, held in Washington D.C. each year since 2001, is a welcome and prominent addition to the nation's growing roster of book-themed events.

Organized and sponsored by the Library of Congress, the festival allows the public to meet favorite authors, preview new titles and mingle with other book lovers.

Free and open to all, the festival spreads over seven blocks of the National Mall, the broad, grassy thoroughfare extending from the U.S. Capitol to the Washington Monument and lined by the Smithsonian Institution museums and national memorials.

Thematic pavilions present authors from popular literary genres like History & Biography, Fiction & Fantasy, Poetry, Children's Literature, and Teens & Children.

The Library of Congress Pavilion features materials from the Veterans History Project, an ongoing effort to document and preserve the experiences of Americans who served their nation in the military, while the Pavilion of the States offers information about local reading and literacy programs.

More information about the National Book Festival is available on the Library of Congress Web site (<http://www.loc.gov/bookfest/index.html> ).

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\*WPD422 09/21/2006

Fact Sheet: U.S. Outlines Challenges Facing U.N., International Community  
(Highlights work on Sudan, Iran, Lebanon, North Korea, Burma) (580)

(begin fact sheet)

U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Public Affairs  
September 21, 2006

## U.S. POLICY IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

The United States looks to work with the United Nations, particularly with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), to address the varied challenges facing the international community.

### Ending the Genocide in Sudan

As a result of the conflict in Darfur, which the United States has called a genocide, thousands of people have been killed, nearly 2 million internally displaced, and over 200,000 made refugees in Chad. With the African Union and other international partners, the United States led the way in achieving the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), signed on May 5, 2006, between the largest rebel group and the Sudanese government. The UN Security Council issued a Presidential Statement on May 9, supporting the implementation of the DPA, and two UN Security Council Resolutions, 1679 and 1706. The latter resolution called for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to Darfur. The United States is working intensively with other Security Council members to ensure that the transition of the African Union forces to a UN-led operation will take place as soon as possible.

### Nonproliferation and Iran

Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons represents a threat to the entire international community. In defiance of repeated calls from the United Nations Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Iranian regime is continuing its nuclear program. The United States, with its international partners, will continue to make every effort to achieve a successful diplomatic outcome, but there must be consequences, such as Security Council sanctions, for Iran's continued defiance.

### A Lasting Peace in Lebanon

The United States worked with the other members of the Security Council to establish conditions for a lasting peace in Lebanon. The enhancement of the UN peacekeeping operation in Lebanon will help the democratic Lebanese government to regain control over its territory. It also will help to provide the

conditions for the full implementation of Resolution 1559, which calls for the end of foreign interference in Lebanese internal affairs and for the disbanding and disarming of militias in Lebanon.

#### Nonproliferation and North Korea

In response to North Korea's launch of several ballistic missiles on July 5, 2006, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1695. The United States participated in and fully supported the Japanese-led efforts in making this resolution possible. In concert with its regional partners, the United States has urged the North Koreans to return without delay to the six-party talks for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. This would allow North Korea to gain economic assistance and security, and to integrate itself into the region.

#### Burma

In adding the issue of Burma to the UN Security Council's permanent agenda on September 15, 2006, UNSC members recognized the grave threat to regional stability posed by the Burmese military junta. The unconscionable human rights abuses visited by the junta upon its own people, nearly a million of whom have been internally displaced or turned into international refugees, are already destabilizing the region. In addition, the government has failed to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Burma and has turned a blind eye to the flourishing trafficking in human beings and narcotics. The international community must act now to stop Burma's abuse of its own people and its endangerment of peace in the region.

(end fact sheet)

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\*WPD423 09/21/2006

Transcript: State Department Deputy Spokesman's Daily Briefing  
(Tom Casey briefs reporters September 21) (4300)

(begin transcript)

U.S. Department of State  
Daily Press Briefing Index  
Thursday, September 21, 2006  
12:55 p.m. EDT

Briefer: Tom Casey, Deputy Spokesman

#### THAILAND

- Reported Ban on Political Activities by the Coup Leaders
- US Calls for Swift Return to Democratic Rule
- Timetable for Elections
- Whereabouts of Thai Prime Minister
- Review of US Assistance Programs
- US Contacts with Thai Government and Coup Leaders

#### NORTH KOREA

- Six-Party Talks

#### CANADA

- Canadian Government Commission's Report on Arar Case

## IRAN

- Next Steps under Resolution 1696/P5+1 Discussions
- Visas for Iranian Delegation to Attend UNGA

## PAKISTAN

- President Musharraf's Visit to US
- Pakistan's Counterterrorism Cooperation

## AFGHANISTAN

- President Karzai's Visit to US
- US Assistance to Afghanistan

## RUSSIA

- Reports Russian Government May Remove Operating Licenses for Western Oil Companies

## EGYPT

- Reports Egypt Plans to Pursue Nuclear Program

## VENEZUELA

- President Chavez's Remarks at UNGA

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2006  
(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

12:55 p.m. EDT

MR. CASEY: Good afternoon, everyone. Don't have any statements or announcements to start you off with this afternoon, so we'll go right to questions.

Arshad, you're up.

QUESTION: On Thailand.

MR. CASEY: Yes.

QUESTION: The coup leaders have now instituted a ban on political activities. What do you think about that?

MR. CASEY: Well, first of all, I think there are still some questions as to exactly what's being done. But we certainly have seen those reports and if these are, in fact true, then that would constitute a setback for democratic rule in Thailand and I think would go against some of the statements that the coup leaders themselves have made. Certainly one of the things I signaled to you yesterday in terms of our views on this situation is that as we move forward there must be a swift return to democratic rule. And as we move forward and move towards elections in Thailand, that also means that there's got to be unfettered participation for all the political parties and for the media in the democratic life of the country; that goes without saying. So this is disappointing and we do consider it a setback.

QUESTION: So -- you just said that it's disappointing and it is a setback and then you said "if true" at the beginning. I mean, do you have enough confidence that, you know, it doesn't seem like there's a whole lot of ambiguity about what you said.

MR. CASEY: All I'm saying, Arshad, is that we have not had a chance to actually study what has been put forward but we've seen the reports. We treat them as true. I just don't have a detailed analysis on the specific measures for you.

QUESTION: Can I follow up?

MR. CASEY: Sure.

QUESTION: The military dictator in Thailand, in Bangkok, said that democracy will be restored within two weeks and a prime minister or leader will be installed, but democracy itself is a long way to go and elections will be maybe next year and the new constitution will be written. Why they have to write a new constitution and democracy is going to be restored?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, some of the specifics of how the Thai people choose to develop their democratic system I'll leave up to them. And certainly we do want to see a handover to civilian authorities as quickly as possible. In terms of a timetable for elections, I have seen those statements saying that this may happen in a year. We'd like to see more rapid progress than that and think that, again, a swift return to democratic civilian government is in order and that includes a swift holding of elections.

QUESTION: A follow-up.

QUESTION: May I just follow this?

MR. CASEY: Sure. Why don't we go to you and then Barry and then in back.

QUESTION: As far as the Thai Prime Minister who was supposed to speak at the UN -- I was there (inaudible) his whereabouts and does the U.S. still support him if he chooses to return to Thailand?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, I don't know his whereabouts. I believe and have seen press reports indicating that he's in London with family members, though I don't have any particular independent confirmation of that.

Barry, did you want to --

QUESTION: Further information about the review of assistance programs, elsewhere in the government they are talking about maybe this will jeopardize work on a new trade agreement. But I think you were talking about ongoing programs and I don't know what they're worth. I'm sure one day isn't time enough to make a decision, but could you bring us up to date?

MR. CASEY: Well, no, I do owe you and your colleagues answers on some of that from yesterday. First of all, what we talked about in terms of some of the legal requirements are things that would fall under Section 508 of the Foreign Operations Assistance Act, so let's start with that.

Under the Foreign Operations Assistance Act, this Fiscal Year -- Fiscal Year '06 - there is approximately \$14 million in bilateral assistance to Thailand that's covered under that. As I said, we are undertaking a review of U.S. Government programs to determine what constitutes -- or which direct assistance to the Government of Thailand falls under these categories and whether there might be additional relevant programs as well.

In terms of military assistance under the Foreign Operations Assistance Act, the combination of Foreign Military Financing and IMET, International Military Education and Training, is approximately \$4 million as I understand it. So that was another sort of fact that we wanted to make sure we got for you today.

QUESTION: And that, too, is under review?

MR. CASEY: That was part of the \$14 million --

QUESTION: Part of the review.

QUESTION: That was part of the 14?

MR. CASEY: That 14 million -- again, since we're looking at programs that come under the Foreign Operations Assistance Act and under Section 508 of that law, that's very specifically part of what we're dealing with here.

QUESTION: So all of that -- of the 14 million is under review, is that correct?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, I think we're looking at everything under the act to determine what constitutes direct assistance to the government and as well as whether there are other relevant programs that are out there, so all of that material is being looked at in regard to Section 508.

QUESTION: I'm sorry. I don't mean to --

MR. CASEY: I'm being legalistic. I'm sorry. Let me try to clarify it for you.

QUESTION: No, no, I'm not trying to be -- so you don't know. You're not sure. Perhaps I'm being obtuse, but I don't get it. Is the 14 -- can we say that the 14 million is under review or is that not clear?

MR. CASEY: You can say that the 14 million is the assistance being provided under the act, under Section 508 of that act. What we are called upon to look at is what constitutes direct assistance to the Government of Thailand and we are looking at all 14 million of that under the terms of that particular part of the law.

QUESTION: And only direct assistance would be affected?

MR. CASEY: Again, I don't have the specific language from Section 508, but it generally refers to direct assistance to the Government of Thailand.

QUESTION: Can I follow up? Any comment that (inaudible) the King, who is acting as (inaudible) cooperated immediately with the coup against democracy in Thailand?

MR. CASEY: I'm sorry, I'm not sure what -- try that again on me, Mr. Lambros. I didn't quite understand the question.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) conduct of the King of Thailand, who acted as an idiot, cooperated deliberately with the coup (inaudible) against democracy in Thailand?

MR. CASEY: Again, Mr. Lambros, I think we talked about the King yesterday. I don't have any information about his specific role in the coup or events leading up to it, so I'll just leave it where I have yesterday.

QUESTION: But did you communicate with him as a U.S. Government? That's my question.

MR. CASEY: I'm not aware of any specific contacts that might have been made with the King. As I said yesterday, we have been in discussions with the relevant political actors, both in terms of those involved in this military leadership that has now taken over as well as with political parties and other major figures in Thailand.

QUESTION: Did you condemn the coup?

MR. CASEY: I did yesterday. I'd refer you back to what I said yesterday.



QUESTION: One more on Thailand. This Prime Minister was a friend of the United States and does U.S. support him?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, I addressed the issues on this yesterday. Obviously what we want to see happen in light of this coup is a quick return to democracy and to democratic rule in Thailand and that's where our focus is now, not on any specific individuals.

Let's go back here.

QUESTION: Thank you. U.S. Embassy to South Korea Ambassador Vershbow had mentioned yesterday if North Korea comes to the six-party talks then United States will -- Assistant Secretary Hill will visit to Pyongyang. Can you comment on that?

MR. CASEY: I'm not aware of those comments. Look, what we've said and what we continue to point out to people is that we have met bilaterally with North Korean officials in the context of the six-party talks. If North Korea should return to the six-party talks, certainly I would expect that there would be additional contacts between Ambassador Hill and his counterpart as part of that six-party discussion. I'm certainly not aware of any proposal or any specific idea that Ambassador Hill would travel elsewhere, whether to Pyongyang or anywhere else in North Korea.

Yes, let's go back here.

QUESTION: On North Korea.

MR. CASEY: Sure.

QUESTION: There was a meeting of the five - the so-called 5+5 and I was wondering, China and Russia did not attend. How does the U.S. feel about that?

MR. CASEY: Well, I think you've heard from Ambassador Hill about that already and, in fact, I know he gave a fairly extensive briefing in New York after that meeting. My understanding was that the reasoning for attendance or non-attendance of various people involved was a matter of scheduling. It certainly wasn't something where it indicated any kind of policy shift or change. All the participants in the six-party talks or all the participants, save North Korea, are very much in accord with one another as to how to proceed.

Let's go over here.

QUESTION: I have a question about Maher Arar. The Canadian Government issued a report this week about his case, documenting his detention and his torture in Syria. This is obviously an issue that has ramifications just beyond his individual case. From your point of view, which U.S. Government department bears responsibility for what happened to Maher Arar?

MR. CASEY: Well, first of all, with respect to the report, I know it got issued yesterday. I know there are people here looking at it, but I don't have an analysis for you of it. In terms of the case itself, my understanding is Mr. Arar was deported from the United States to Syria. That process is the responsibility of what was then the U.S. Immigration Service, now the Immigration and Customs Authority. I would have to go back and check the record as to whether at the time where that particular operation fell in the U.S. bureaucracy. But those would be questions you'd want to direct to the Department of Homeland Security which has that responsibility currently.

QUESTION: Is Mr. Arar owed an apology by the U.S. Government?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, I think we've spoken to this case before and I really don't have anything to add on it and I'd refer you over to the agencies involved it more directly for any other comment.

QUESTION: But haven't you been saying that the U.S. Government does not deport people to countries where there is a possibility of torture?

MR. CASEY: Well, George, as we've always said, too, whenever there are several different issues involved here and I can probably get John Bellinger down here to give you a full review of the legal issues involved. But my understanding was that this case was handled in accordance with our international obligations and that would certainly include obligations not to send individuals to countries where we have a reasonable expectation that they'd be subject to torture.

Yes, let's go over here.

QUESTION: Changing the subject. May I change the subject?

MR. CASEY: Sure.

QUESTION: Despite the continuation of the negotiation between Mr. Solana and Mr. Larijani next week in Europe, is there any change to a position or a policy, meaning to pursue Security Council Resolution 1696 and prepare for the sanction?

MR. CASEY: There is no change in policy. I think you heard from the Secretary on this yesterday. The process that we're going through right now is the one outlined in 1696. That process set an August 31 deadline for an Iranian response. The Iranians did not choose to accept the opportunity that was presented to them to suspend uranium enrichment and to engage in negotiations with the P-5+1.

That said, as you heard from Ambassador Burns the other evening after the P-5+1 dinner, we certainly all continue to support the continued discussions between Mr. Solana and Mr. Larijani. It would be wonderful if the Iranian Government had a change of heart and did decide to accept the very clear and very straightforward conditions laid out in 1696 and then proceeded to a path of negotiations. But that hasn't happened yet. And in the interim, while Mr. Solana and Mr. Larijani are having conversations, we are also having conversations, including with the Ministers the other night in New York about next steps under 1696, which would be a further resolution, bringing about sanctions, Chapter 41 -- Article 41 -- Chapter 7 sanctions. Sorry about that. And that's where we're going and that's where we're continuing.

By the way, I also just want to -- since you raised the issue of Iran -- just point out something, I saw a couple of stories that appeared today, saying that the reason why Mr. Larijani had not traveled to New York and had not met with Mr. Solana was somehow based on the notion that the United States had not given visas to members of his party. I addressed this yesterday, but just let me point out again for the record that we received 150 applications for visas for the Iranian delegation in New York. We granted visas and processed them and gave them for 125 individuals. Those that have not yet been approved were ones that were turned in late on Friday night with request to travel on Monday and they were subsequently withdrawn by the Iranian Government. So there's simply no truth to the idea that Iranian officials in Mr. Larijani's party or others wishing to attend the UN were denied visas or otherwise prohibited from coming.

QUESTION: Larijani got a visa, right?

MR. CASEY: Yes.

QUESTION: Can we go to criticism -- your criticism of Thai -- or military rulers extends does it to their taking over the functions of parliament as well as their movement against political parties?

MR. CASEY: Well, Barry, look --

QUESTION: I mean, that seems to be the two main things they've done.

MR. CASEY: Well, I think it's pretty clear that when you have a coup, when you depose or have a break with democracy that whatever is included in that is something that neither we nor any other democratic country can support.

QUESTION: Tomorrow General Musharraf will be here and meeting with the U.S. officials including, I am sure, Secretary Rice and President Bush and also next week will be also the Afghan President. All three will meet. There is (inaudible) in Afghanistan as far as the President Karzai is concerned that Taliban are coming back and across the border from Pakistan. He had (inaudible) over and over and now I think this is what he is here -- already here for this problem. My question is that you think Secretary will have harsh words for General Musharraf as far as Usama bin Laden is concerned or Taliban are back or harbor terrorism? Pakistan now you must watching CNN and all (inaudible.) So where do we stand as far as this meeting is concerned -- his visit this time?

MR. CASEY: Well, first of all, in terms of the meetings, the Secretary will meet and has met in the past with both General Musharraf and with President Karzai. She'll be part of the President's meetings. But because this is essentially a head-of-state visit, head-of-government visit and deals with meetings with the President, in terms of the agenda for those discussions or readouts on them, I'm going to leave that to the White House for you.

What I can say certainly is that we continue to work with both the Government of Pakistan and the Government of Afghanistan to help deal with the security issues that are out there. Part of the reason why we meet in a trilateral format -- Afghanistan, Pakistan and the U.S. -- is an acknowledgement of the fact that what happens on one side of the border affects what happens on the other side of the border and that we need to all be working together in coordination with one another to deal with the problems out there. Those are discussions that we've had at a variety of levels and in a fairly continuous way. And the meeting at a head-of-state level is, in effect, part of a continuation of that dialogue and certainly something we encourage. But this isn't about pointing fingers at one another. What this is about is finding ways that we can all work together to be able to achieve our common objectives, which is a free, secure and independent Afghanistan and a secure Pakistan border area as well.

QUESTION: Is the agreement between Pakistan and what some of the press delicately refer to as "militant groups" in which they promise not to cross the border for ambush raids -- it was one of the subjects taken up by General Jones before Senate Foreign Relations this morning. He said it could be helpful. I don't know if the State Department has ever taken a position on the agreement whether you, too, bless the agreement and think it could be useful.

MR. CASEY: Well --

QUESTION: It's -- you know, it's a compromise.

MR. CASEY: Barry, look, we had spoken to this previously and I didn't see General Jones' comments before. Again, what we want to see the Government of Pakistan do, the Government of Afghanistan do and what we want to be able to help them do is take actions to ensure that there isn't cross-border traffic that no part of Pakistan or a part of Afghanistan are being used for raids across the way. I don't have a characterization for you of that agreement beyond what we've already said. We very much appreciate the efforts that the Pakistani Government is making to combat terrorism. They're a strong partner with us in it. And, you know, I'd see their actions basically in the context of that.

QUESTION: And on aid to Afghanistan, Senator Feingold complained today that in the last few years U.S. aid seems to go up and down. He's suggesting that maybe U.S. support of Afghanistan isn't as steadfast as it should be. Why would aid to Afghanistan -- and you know I think it was Kerry talked about Iraq being the distraction -- maybe it was Feingold -- along the same critical path -- is Afghanistan being short-changed in the interest of pursuing a war in Iraq?

MR. CASEY: Well, Barry, I didn't see any of the specific comments you're referring to, but I think in general it's very clear that we've got a strong and enduring commitment to Afghanistan and to the people

of Afghanistan. We are making very strong efforts to support the government of that country, to help President Karzai as he moves forward with developing that country's democratic system. And we have a very strong and robust aid program to that country. It's working on a wide variety of issues, including the very important question of dealing with the narcotics problem. So certainly I think we are paying full attention to the needs of Afghanistan and our support for Afghanistan remains absolutely steadfast and strong. Obviously there are many other issues out there that we also need to focus on, including Iraq, but we certainly can manage to do both.

QUESTION: Tom, the reports out of Moscow that the Russian Government is suggesting that it might withdraw the operating licenses to some Western oil companies, including Exxon-Mobil for cost overruns and other alleged problems in their work in Russia. Do you -- are you concerned at all about the way the Russian Government is treating Western and particularly American oil companies?

MR. CASEY: You know, Arshad, I did try and look into this for you before I came out here and I didn't get enough of an answer to be able to confidently speak to you on it right now, so I'll work on getting something for you a little later today.

Kirit.

QUESTION: Something I wanted to ask you about yesterday -- didn't get a chance to. There were comments out of Cairo by Gamal Mubarak that Egypt plans to pursue a nuclear program. I was wondering if you had any comments on that or if that raised any concern in Washington?

MR. CASEY: Well, I haven't seen those comments. But, again, I think U.S. position worldwide is clear. We support the Nonproliferation Treaty. We certainly do not object to the rights of any country to have a peaceful nuclear program. I'm not aware of any specific activities or programs that the Egyptian Government is pursuing, no.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. CASEY: We've got two more. Go ahead, Goyal.

QUESTION: Two quick one. One is death call for the Pope from some sections of the Muslim community.

MR. CASEY: I think I've dealt with that over the last couple of days. I mean, obviously what we want to promote is a culture of tolerance. We want to promote dialogue among religious leaders. There's certainly no excuse for calls for violence.

QUESTION: One more quick one, Venezuela please. As far as the U.S. is concerned -- I was there and listened to him -- don't you think this is a misuse of the global stage by the (inaudible) leader who came to -- the UN is for unity and not for this kind of words. Do you think you -- U.S. is not calling for an apology or -

MR. CASEY: Look, the Secretary has spoken to that. I spoke to it yesterday. I think it's up to the Venezuelan people to determine whether their President represented them well or not.

QUESTION: On Greece and Cyprus. Today the Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis under the capacity of the President of the Security Council of the U.N., presided especially in New York City for the Middle East issue. May we have your comment, Mr. Spokesman, (inaudible) after the talks on this crucial problem yesterday between President Bush and the Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas?

MR. CASEY: I don't need to give you comments on the President's meeting with President Abbas because they spoke to it themselves right after the meeting and I'd just refer you back to their comments.

QUESTION: And on Cyprus, the Cypriot Foreign Minister George Lillikas initiated the talks in Paris, France, the ongoing (inaudible) process for a closer Cypriot-French rapprochement. According to Defense News, Cyprus and France concluded finally a new defense cooperation agreement. I'm wondering how this Cypriot plans military rapprochement affects Europe because for 33 years (inaudible) the final solution via UN in order to end the Turkish invasion and occupation of the Republic of Cyprus?

MR. CASEY: Mr. Lambros, any agreements reached between the Government of France and the Government of Cyprus are matters for them to discuss, not us. Obviously our position on Cyprus remains unchanged.

QUESTION: Thank you.

MR. CASEY: Arshad, you have one last one.

QUESTION: One last one on Iran. President Ahmadi-Nejad is quoted today as having said at a news conference up in New York some fairly -- making some fairly positive sounds about negotiations on a suspension. Do you take those at face value? Do you think that's encouraging or do you think that they are just stalling and playing for time?

MR. CASEY: Well, I haven't seen the specific comments. I've seen some reporting on it. Again, the clear process that we have and the formal process that we have for dealing with this issue is through Mr. Solana and Mr. Larijani. Certainly we would like to see Iran comply with 1696, to take up the opportunity for negotiations offered and go ahead and suspend their nuclear activities as called for in that resolution. But saying that we are considering, that we're thinking about or that -- or that we're interested in, aren't the same things as actually saying, yes, we're going to do it and then going ahead and doing it in a verifiable way. So very much what we're looking for is a real and firm commitment to do it and then actions taken that will allow us to verify that it's been done.

Okay. Thanks, guys.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:21 p.m.)

(end transcript)

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\*WPD424 09/21/2006

Text: U.S. Health Secretary Marks Progress Against Avian Flu  
(Statement comes on first anniversary of international flu partnership) (680)

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt issued the following statement September 20 in recognition of the first anniversary of the formation of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza.

Following is the text of the statement:

(begin text)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Press Release  
September 20, 2006

Statement by Mike Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services

## On the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, United Nations General Assembly

One year ago President Bush announced the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, an effort to bring together key nations and international organizations to improve the world's readiness for a possible human influenza pandemic.

Since that announcement, the global effort to prepare for and respond to a potential human influenza pandemic has gained momentum and strength. The International Partnership has been an important element in support of these global efforts to improve international disease surveillance, transparency in the reporting of cases, the timeliness of such reporting, and the response capabilities of affected nations.

In the past year, the H5N1 strain of avian flu has spread to more than 40 additional countries and has led to the deaths of hundreds of millions of additional birds, which has heightened concern about the potential for a human flu pandemic. Furthermore, the number of avian flu cases in humans has more than doubled to more than 240 cases in 10 countries. Tragically, more than half of those persons infected have died. This persistence of the avian flu virus to sustain itself and spread reminds us of the urgency to redouble our efforts to be ready should the avian flu virus evolve into a human pandemic.

In the United States, we have been making significant investments in vaccines, antivirals, and research. This research is likely to benefit not only citizens of the United States, but also citizens of the world.

Earlier this year, we recently awarded \$1.0 billion in contracts to develop cell-based vaccines against both seasonal and pandemic influenza with the goal of having sufficient domestic vaccine production capacity to vaccinate all Americans within 6 months of the declaration of a pandemic. In addition, we are working on dose-sparing measures to enable us to produce more treatment courses for more people and are developing a library of live virus vaccine candidates against all known influenza strains with pandemic potential. In addition, we have developed rapid diagnostic testing for H5 strains that shorten testing time. We are also looking at mitigation strategies should a pandemic break out.

But responding to a pandemic will demand the cooperation of the world community. No nation can go it alone. If a country is to protect its own people, it must work together with other nations to protect the people of the world.

I believe there are four principles of preparedness, and I have spoken of them before: transparency, rapid reporting, sharing of data, and scientific cooperation. The United States will do its part to advance those principles.

We are funding the Specimen Transport Fund, managed by the Secretariat of the World Health Organization (WHO). It is a key innovation in getting samples from affected countries in a timely and secure fashion. We also support early, voluntary compliance with the revised International Health Regulations. We also have made sizeable investments in creating a worldwide network of influenza surveillance, through bilateral assistance, work with the WHO Secretariat and its Regional Offices, and through partnerships with a number of international labs. Furthermore, in response to President Bush's commitment to forward-positioning a portion of U.S. antiviral stocks for use in a human pandemic containment effort, we have deployed treatment courses of Tamiflu to a secure location in Asia.

Today, I am pleased to renew our commitment to the International Partnership. It is our collective global resources and cooperation that will make our pandemic preparedness efforts a success and that will position us as a global community to better prepared tomorrow than we are today.

(end text)

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Iranian-Born American Is World's First Muslim Woman in Space  
(Anousheh Ansari joins astronauts, cosmonauts on International Space Station) (700)

By Tim Receveur  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – When Iranian-born American Anousheh Ansari blasted into space from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on September 18 aboard a Soyuz spacecraft, she accomplished more than fulfilling a childhood dream: She made the history books.

Ansari, who is on an eight-day visit to the International Space Station (ISS), became the first Muslim woman and first Iranian in space as well as the first private female space tourist. The launch was six days after her 40th birthday.

Accompanying her on the mission are Expedition 14 commander Michael Lopez-Alegria, a Spanish-born American, and Russian flight engineer Mikhail Tyurin, who will spend six months in orbit as the station's 14th permanent crew. The three arrived at the space station early on September 20. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060918133733lcnirellep0.2851526> ).)

Ansari, a telecommunications entrepreneur, is scheduled to return to Earth September 28 with two outgoing Expedition 13 crew members -- commander Pavel Vinogradov, a Russian cosmonaut, and science officer Jeff Williams, a NASA astronaut. Another current ISS crew member, European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut and flight engineer Thomas Reiter, is scheduled to stay aboard the station until December.

Ansari is flying under contract with Roskosmos, the Russian Federal Space Agency, according to a NASA press release. Her flight was arranged through Space Adventures, Ltd., a company based in Arlington, Virginia. It has organized spaceflights for three other private space explorers, all men.

To afford her some privacy on the space station, she has been assigned a separate sleeping space in the station's docking module.

"Anousheh is a true space ambassador and is dedicated to using her experience to educate as many people as possible. During her stay, she will perform four scientific experiments for the ESA examining causes of anemia and back pain that affect astronauts in zero gravity, as well as investigating the effects of space radiation and bacteria on the health of space crews.

In addition, she has launched a space blog where she will answer questions from around the world.

"The launch was very smooth. The trip to the station felt long but it was worth it. I cannot keep my eyes off the windows. Earth is magnificent and peaceful from up here," said Ansari on her September 20 blog entry.

"The Earth is so beautiful and if we could all see it this way I'm sure we would do everything in our power to preserve it. I truly hope that more and more people get to experience this trip first hand," she said.

To prepare for her spaceflight, Ansari completed a cosmonaut-training program at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center located in Star City, Russia.

Ansari immigrated to the United States in 1984 at the age of 16 knowing only a few words of English and became a successful telecommunications entrepreneur. She is co-founder and chairman of Prodea Systems Inc., a consumer technology company headquartered in Texas. In 2004, the Ansari family made

a multimillion dollar contribution to the X-Prize Foundation, which offered a \$10 million prize to the first nongovernment organization that could launch a reusable manned spacecraft into space twice within a two-week period.

According to the foundation's Web site, 26 teams from seven different nations competed for the multimillion dollar prize. On October 4, 2004, the X Prize Foundation awarded the prize to Mojave Aerospace Ventures for the flight of the experimental space plane SpaceShipOne.

In addition to space flight, Ansari has an interest in social entrepreneurship. She has served on the boards of directors for the Make-a-Wish Foundation of North Texas and works with a number of other nonprofit organizations, including the Ashoka Foundation in its support of social entrepreneurs.

In a related story, the U.S. Space Shuttle Atlantis landed safely in Florida on September 21 bringing to a successful end its 11-day mission to resume construction of the ISS. (See article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=September&x=20060921123000lcnirellep0.7709162> ).)

More information on the Ansari X Prize ( [http://xprize.org/xprizes/ansari\\_x\\_prize.html](http://xprize.org/xprizes/ansari_x_prize.html) ) and Anousheh Ansari's Space Blog ( <http://spaceblog.xprize.org/> ) can be found at her Web site.

For additional information on the International Space Station, see Science and Technology ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global\\_issues/scitech.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/scitech.html) ). See also Muslim Life in America ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/muslimlife/> ).

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